

CITY OF PINELLAS PARK, FLORIDA

PINELLAS ASSEMBLY MEETING

AUGUST 11, 2003

Meeting was called to order at 5:09 P.M.

PRESENT: Pinellas Assembly Committee Members: Ray Neri, Roger Sellev, Ed Armstrong, Jim Miles, Dan Massaro, David Stone, Staff Members: Michael Gustafson and Jake Stowers

ABSENT: Committee Members: Judy Mitchell, Grady Pridgen, Paul King and Ed Droste

GUESTS: Mark Ely, Mitch Bobowski, Gordon Beardslee, Emily Coeyman, Charles Attando, Elithia Stanfield, Commissioner Karen Seel, Gina Clayton, Dave Healey, Gary Jones, and Tammi Bach

Chairman Armstrong asked for a motion to approve the minutes of July 21, 2003. Motion was made by Committee Member Massaro and seconded by Committee Member Sellev.

Chairman Armstrong stated he had some housekeeping items, the first being that the Board of County Commissioners and the Council of Mayors is having a meeting in early September with a representative from each task force of the Pinellas Assembly. Chairman Armstrong will be unable to attend and asked for another member of the committee to represent him. Committee Member Sellev agreed to attend the meeting.

Chairman Armstrong stated as an information point, he was expressing his personal feelings concerning the newspaper article dealing with the lawsuit that was filed by the City of Largo and the City of Seminole against Pinellas County asking among other things, to overturn and make void Ordinance 00-63. In terms of what the committee's task is, Chairman Armstrong felt they should move forward.

Committee Stone asked how what the committee decides upon could effect the litigation?

Chairman Armstrong stated the lawsuits are technical legal arguments and doesn't feel any decisions the committee makes will have any effect on the outcome.

Staff Member Gustafson stated there are interlocal agreements standing and no matter how the litigation comes out, the agreements are in place.

Staff Member Stowers tends to agree that it is a very technical issue and that there are still some rules and regulations in place.

Moving on to the evenings' meeting, Chairman Armstrong stated the committee had talked previously about annexation and enclaves but had not gotten their arms around the discussion of referendums. The City of Seminole has chosen the annexation by referendum method more so than any other municipality, having five areas pending referendum on August 26, 2003. Chairman Armstrong had receive an e-mail from Mr. Ely from the City of Seminole asking if he could have to opportunity to address the committee explaining some things they are doing by way of background.

Mr. Bobowski, General Service Director for the City of Seminole presented an overview of what Seminole does with annexation by referendum. Mr. Bobowski also explained how the referendum process got started. In late 1999 ninety-nine the City of Seminole was approached by the Seminole Lakes Country Club to hear more information regarding annexation into the city. Their request to the city was prompted by the fear that either Pinellas Park and/or Largo or somebody would eventually take them in through an annexation process where they wouldn't have an opportunity to have a say as to who they went with. That is what predicated the initial discussion that fueled the referendum frenzy for the City of Seminole.

There is a need to have annexation boundaries and a need to have a calm brought to the annexation question by putting the planning area boundaries together and Seminole supported that concept except they didn't support the outcome of what the planning area boundaries were.

Mr. Bobowski stated the City undertook a Comprehensive Ability to Serve Report which they have to provide an ability to serve to the County and the Pinellas Planning Council in a certain time frame prior to initiating the process of having Council adopt the ordinances and starting with the referendum legal process. They adopted the same principle as the serve reports that are turned into the County that took in approximately 12 square miles and 47,000 people. It's bordered by Park Street on the East of Starkey to 110th Avenue down 131st Avenue to the Intercoastal and back through the Bay Pines area. The Comprehensive Ability to Serve Report has been the basis of what they have looked at in terms of alternate growth for the City. This is what Seminole thought their boundaries should have been when they were first established in November of 2000. Seminole provides the traditional municipal services and also contracts out a number of services. The City has the ability to serve this geographic area and has taken a low-key approach to annexations through the referendum process and it is a democratic process. The City of Seminole is not opposed to putting some restrictions placed on the referendum if, in fact, they could have their planning area boundaries expanded to where they really feel they have the appropriate ability to serve the public.

Staff Member Stowers stated that the concept the City of Seminole has is democratic under the laws today and they do a lot of homework before they go forward.

Mr. Bobowski suggested that an interlocal agreement be entered into with the County to not annex for a period of years and then work through some of the issues.

Chairman Armstrong stated his expectation would be if the committee would recommend that the boundary lines be adjusted for the City of Seminole, they would then expect other municipalities to come forward and wondered how that would be dealt with.

Mr. Bobowski stated that the City of Seminole was unique inasmuch as the services that they provide are different from other communities. The City of Seminole does not provide police and fire service. The City of Seminole has a franchise agreement with Waste Management.

Mr. Ely referred to the City of Seminole as being “City Lite”. They focus on residential code enforcement, recreation and landscaping for the medians.

Mr. Bobowski stated he would like, in the future, to correct the boundary lines and work out some interlocal agreements that would stop the annexation referendums, as they are known today.

After further discussion, Mr. Bobowski stated the purpose of the discussion was to get the task force thinking about the effects the referendum has on annexation countywide.

Staff Member Gustafson stated he had attended a Fire/EMS meeting earlier in the day and they had invited all Mayors and City Managers to the meeting to give their input and it was Mr. Gustafson’s suggestion that the committee may choose to invite them to one of their meetings.

Committee Member Neri stated he felt the committee was back to square one. Mr. Neri stated that the original question was: is there a place for an unincorporated area in Pinellas County? Mr. Neri felt they now wanted to accommodate all the cities. Therefore, there wouldn’t be any discussion as to what’s left, because there won’t be any. Mr. Neri stated what they may want to look at is what part of the County do they want to preserve and let the rest go to the cities.

Chairman Armstrong stated he felt annexation by referendum is a gaping weakness. Just as it was proposed to freeze the boundaries for three to five years, either by interlocal agreement or a change in the charter, there should be a similar restriction on annexation by referendum as part of the package that the committee collectively recommends. Chairman Armstrong stated that during the window of time where there is a standstill, it could lead to a better job of coming up with criteria for moving the previous service area boundaries.

Committee Member Sellew stated that he agreed with Chairman Armstrong but had a different take on it. Part of it needs to be a chance for people to sit back and decide what is it they really want and look what it is they’re trying to do with Pinellas County. Mr. Sellew stated that what Chairman Armstrong had suggested was enough of a disengagement to get people to look at what is the best outcome for Pinellas County, rather than have continual fights.

Chairman Armstrong called for a straw vote on the issue, which was unanimous.

Mr. Attando, asked how the unanimous straw vote would impact a City like Tarpon Springs and what the advantage would be to them?

Chairman Armstrong stated one of the advantages the City of Tarpon Springs might see is with the window of time for meaningful discussion about future criteria in the planning area that would be more favorable than what there is right now.

Given the time, Chairman Armstrong suggested the rest of the discussion be deferred until the next scheduled meeting on August 25, 2003

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

Cynthia S. LeVan
Administrative Assistant

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